

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY  
HARRISBURG

PA 177.4

No.15

THE BEDBUG (*Cimex lectularius L.*)

It is no disgrace to have bedbugs but every good housekeeper dislikes to have this disgusting human parasite in the home. It is not generally known among housekeepers that this little "visitor" will migrate from one house to another, passing through cracks in walls or along the water pipes or gutters. Migration from an infested house is sure to happen if the human occupants leave.

During the day these pests hide in all sorts of places; in the cracks of the floors, under the washboards, and wall paper, in the walls; and where wooden beds are used they can be found in the cracks and under the slats. The activity of bedbugs is regulated by the food supply. They feed exclusively upon human blood. They can go long periods without food. Experiments have proven that adults can live from 54 to 316 days without food. Even newly hatched bedbugs live 17 to 42 days without any food whatever.

Heat is a satisfactory exterminator of the bedbug. Temperature of 125 to 130 degrees Fahr. is required; and this temperature must be maintained for eight or ten hours to insure penetration to all parts of the room. This will kill the insect in the egg as well as the adult stage. In recommending this treatment we are assuming that the house has hot air, hot water, or steam heat - with these it is a simple matter to heat the house. If the house is heated by stoves it still can be heated to the required temperature, but somebody will have a warm job in attending to the fires. During the cooler part of the year when it is impossible to raise the temperature in the house to the required heat, it will be better to seek relief by fumigating with hydrocyanic acid or sulfur fumes.

Hydrocyanic acid gas (a deadly poison to all animals including man,) is an effective fumigant, but should not be used by any person not familiar with its deadly nature. THE GAS IS SO DEADLY THAT WE DO NOT LIKE TO RECOMMEND ITS GENERAL USE.

Burning sulfur as a fumigant. Use three pounds for each 1000 cubic feet of space, and close the building tightly for twelve hours at least. It will be better if it can remain unopened for 24 hours. There is danger of bleaching and tarnishing household fabrics, furnishings, wall papers, silverware, and brass beds, especially in moist weather when fumigating with sulfur. These latter can be treated with gasoline and removed from the house, or they can be protected with a coat of vaseline before fumigating.

To avoid any damage from the sulfur boiling over when burning, set the vessel holding it in a much larger receptacle, the latter being partly filled with earth, sand, or water, and place all in the center of the rooms. A tub and iron bucket make a good combination. Place denatured alcohol on the sulfur pile to aid quick burning.

For cleaning beds and other furniture a thorough soaking with high test gasoline will give results. It must be injected into the cracks with squirt guns or with feathers or small brushes. Gasoline will kill all stages provided they are reached. Gasoline is explosive, and fire should be kept away.

